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TAGS: PREL PTER KPKO UNSC IS LE SY

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WOLFF'S NOVEMBER 10 MEETING WITH UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR LEBANON MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Classified By: Ambassador Alex D. Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams told Ambassador Wolff on November 10 that he favorably views the January 2010 transition in UNIFIL Force Commanders. Williams said he thought Spain would do a good job and its holding of the EU Presidency from January to June 2010 could prove helpful leverage for UNSCOL. He said that General Graziano has been on the job for three years which is a long time given the environment. Williams said that the LAF has developed certain routines in the south which have frustrated Graziano and a new Force Commander would help shake things up. He specifically noted increased tensions between UNIFIL and the LAF, particularly in terms of getting access to the sites of the major incidents during the last quarter. At the Tayr Falsay site, he noted, there was no forensic evidence remaining when UNIFIL was eventually able to access it. Williams pressed for the USG, as the major supporter of the LAF, to help UNIFIL vis a vis the LAF.

¶2. (C) Williams also commented that a major hindrance is the lack of any extension of GOL authority in the south, aside from the LAF. He noted that Defense Minister Murr has never been to the south, and that Interior Minister Baroud visited for the first time only two weeks ago. Ambassador Wolff pressed Williams to articulate this lack of specific governmental authority in the south in the next UNSCR 1701 report. Williams agreed with Ambassador Wolff's suggestion that there should be a very senior GOL presence, either the President or Prime Minister, at the UNIFIL change of command ceremony at Naquora. Ambassador Wolff stressed to Williams that in the period ahead with a new government and a new UNIFIL force commander, we need to keep reminding all of what they need to do or it will not get done, leaving Hizballah feeling emboldened. Williams responded that Hizballah already feels emboldened and does not admit that they committed "flagrant violations" of 1701 during the last quarter.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Wolff asked if Williams meets with the Syrians regularly to which Williams replied that he only has a regular discussion with the Perm Rep in New York. Williams noted that the Syrian Perm Rep continues to argue that Syria has no role to play in the implementation of 1701, but he continues to ask to see Williams. He admitted that he has not yet met with the Syrian Ambassador in Beirut whom he characterized as a commuter from Damascus and is rarely seen in Beirut.

¶4. (C) Williams said he was skeptical of DPKO's review of UNIFIL because they are looking at it through a very narrow definition. Ambassador Wolff asked Williams to think about the UNIFIL mandate and how it could be strengthened so that UNIFIL can be more assertive and robust. Williams said he is planning to go to Madrid to brief the next Force Commander before his arrival in Lebanon.

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